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Reducing Infant Mortality Becomes Policy Priority

In S.C., 'Resource Mothers' Help Raise The Odds for Babies

By Ellen Flax

CROSS, S.C.—More than 600 babies born each year in South Carolina do not live to celebrate their first birthday.

For DeKendrick Davis, fortunately, the odds have gone up that he will not meet the same fate.

Lisa Davis, DeKendrick's 14-year-old mother, lives with her own mother and four siblings in a small wooden shanty with buckling linoleum floors, miles from the nearest medical facility.

But the 3-month-old boy has a powerful advocate in his corner to ensure his healthy survival, a state-appointed "resource mother" who has been at his young mother's side since her fifth month of pregnancy.

During her periodic visits to the Davis household here over the past several months, the resource mother, Debra White, has talked to Lisa about how being pregnant has changed her child-like body, and has reminded her when to go for her prenatal and well-baby medical appointments. And now with DeKendrick's birth, Ms. White is helping Lisa adjust to her new role as a mother.

Lisa, who answered most of Ms. White's questions about her child-care responsibilities with a barely audible "yes" or "no," has made all but one of her medical appointments, despite not having a telephone in the house or a reliable means of transportation to the clinic.

Despite such barriers, Ms. White told Lisa, she should continue to seek out medical care, especially when DeKendrick has an unusual symptom or needs a vaccine.

"Don't wait for something in the mail," Ms. White told the girl. "Just take him to the clinic."

Ms. White, part-friend, part-advocate, and a font of knowledge about babies, is one of 16 resource mothers hired by South Carolina to be on the front line in

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Jeff Amberg

A "resource mother" in South Carolina has given Lisa Davis, 14, help and advice on prenatal care and parenting since her fifth month of pregnancy.

Science-Reform Goals Elusive, NAEP Data Find

Results, Survey Paint 'Sad' Classroom Picture

By Robert Rothman

WASHINGTON—Nearly a decade after national reports sounded the alarm about the state of science education in the United States, the National Assessment of Educational Progress has found that those reports' calls for equal opportunities and excellence in the subject are "just as pertinent" as in 1983.

In a report issued here last week, based on a 1990 assessment of 19,000 students in grades 4, 8, and 12, NAEP found that few students were able to perform at high levels of proficiency in science.

Even among high-school seniors, who are about to enter postsecondary education or the workforce, the report found, fewer than half demonstrated the ability to apply knowledge to interpret graphs and tables, evaluate and design experiments, and show detailed knowledge of scientific information.

In addition, the study found that there were substantial gaps in performance between white and Hispanic and black students, and that males outperformed females in 8th and 12th grade.

And, in what observers called a disturbing finding, the report also pointed out that

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Honig Faces Trial on Criminal Charges of Conflict of Interest

By Lonnie Harp

Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig of California confirmed late last week that he will face a criminal trial over felony conflict-of-interest charges following an indictment by a state grand jury.

Although state law-enforcement officials declined to comment on the case, reports of the indictment had appeared in the press earlier last week.

In a telephone interview and in a San Francisco press conference, Mr. Honig continued to vehemently deny any wrongdoing in the state education department's dealings with his wife's nonprofit education firm, which have spawned the state probe as well as federal audits and investigations.

He added, however, that his lawyer and lawyers from the state attorney general's office had agreed that he would surrender to court officials late last week or early this week and remain free on bail pending a trial.

Mr. Honig indicated that the indictment is based on a state law that prohibits state officials from having a financial stake in any contract approved by their office. The felony carries a maximum three-year sen-

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Maine's 'Common Core' Offers a Lesson in Standards

By Debra Viadero

AUGUSTA, ME.—More than a year before a national panel of educators and business and political leaders called on the nation to define and set high standards for what every child should know and be able to do, the state of Maine had already set off down a similar path.

Educators and citizens here came up with "Maine's Common Core of Learning," a wide-ranging, 55-page plan that establishes 151 goals for student learning. Neither as specific as a curriculum framework nor as sweeping as a vision statement, the document spells out what students should know when they leave school and the skills and attitudes they should take with them.

Maine's effort resembles in some ways, but not in others, what the members of the

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Scott Perry

"It's frustrating teaching sometimes . . . you feel, 'Where am I going with this?' " says Steven Heath, who teaches at Brook Cascade Elementary School.

Also in the news

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The Educational Testing Service plans to begin offering some of its tests on a national computer network.

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A new survey finds a world of difference between the math standards and the real world of the classroom.

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A European agency concerned with school design and construction is opening its doors to U.S states.

IN SUMMARY

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A study finds a sizable minority of Native American youths are prone to suicidal tendencies, alcohol abuse, and other unhealthful behaviors.
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Variety in New York
The New York City school system is moving to create an assortment of small, theme-oriented high schools that will be more supportive of and offer greater choice to students. **Page 5.**

Pondering Violent Students
Following complaints by a high-school headmaster, city and school officials in Boston are grappling with how to deal with abusive and violent students.
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Doubts About Testing
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Making Gains in Math
While enrollment in math and science courses is up, too few students are taking the more challenging advanced courses, a new report concludes.
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Revamping High Schools
A California task force has called for an overhaul of the state's high schools aimed at upgrading courses and strengthening the connection between school and work.
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No Right To Sue
The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that a federal child-welfare law does not give children in state foster care a private right to sue in federal court to improve state services or conditions. **Page 25.**

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ACROSS THE NATION

STATES

Final Report of Rhode Island Panel Calls for Array of School Reforms

The 21st Century Education Commission in Rhode Island issued its final report last month, calling for an array of reforms ranging from shared decisionmaking at every school to creation of a series of professional-development schools to train teachers.

The commission, appointed by Gov. Bruce G. Sundlun, urged the state department of education, along with schools and districts, to establish statewide standards for student outcomes and to develop performance-based assessments linked to those standards. Schools that fail to meet the standards over several years should be subject to state intervention, including closure, the commission recommended.

In addition, the commission suggested that each Rhode Island district develop a formal and ongoing improvement process, including curriculum plans and a local accountability mechanism.

In the area of school funding, the commission said the state should pay 60 percent of the cost of education and should provide a more equitable allocation of state aid for public schools.

The commission earlier backed away from Mr. Sundlun's suggestion that the state look at a regionalization plan that would consolidate the number of school districts from 37 to no more than 6.

■ **A California appeals court has ruled that public-school officials in the state cannot be held liable for the welfare of students off campus and after school unless they have reason to believe there will be trouble.**

The court last month overturned a lower-court decision and found that the Los Angeles Unified School District was not negligent in its supervision when a high-school student was shot after school in 1985 on a street adjacent to his campus.

The California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, ruled 3 to 0 on March 16 to overturn a Los Angeles superior court's award of $120,000 in damages to Ernest P. Brownell 3rd, who was wounded minutes after being dismissed from Johnson Opportunity High School in south-central Los Angeles.

Mr. Brownell was attacked by gang members wearing the red colors of the "Bloods," who had mistaken him for a member of their rival gang, the "Crips." Mr. Brownell charged that the district was negligent because it had dismissed students without first determining if the street in front of the school was free of gang members, the decision said.

But the appeals court found the district had "satisfied its supervisorial responsibilities."

School officials had testified that during 1985 it was school policy to prohibit the wearing of gang colors and paraphernalia and that they often confiscated such items—as well as weapons—from students.

"[T]he law requires ordinary care, not fortresses; schools must be reasonably supervised, not impenetrable to all gang-related violence," the court wrote.

Charles Carpenter, a lawyer representing the school district, said he was pleased but not surprised by the ruling.

"There was no evidence in any way that the teachers and the administrators at that school had any notice that there was going to be an incident that day," he said.

Mr. Brownell's lawyer could not be reached for comment last week.

■ **The Mississippi Supreme Court has upheld the 1990 dismissal of the superintendent of the state's school for the deaf.**

The high court ruled last month that the school's trustees had the right to fire Alma L. Alexander after an investigation revealed dozens of incidents of unreported abuse dating back to the 1970's. The alleged abuse included fondling, student rapes, physical abuse, and neglect.

The school's trustees voted to dismiss Ms. Alexander for lack of leadership and for failing to report suspected abuse, as required by state law. She was never charged with any criminal wrongdoing.

After a local court upheld the firing in July 1990, Ms. Alexander's lawyers appealed to the state supreme court.

Ms. Alexander is retired and living in Louisiana, according to her lawyer. ■

DISTRICTS

Court Approves Home Tutoring For Disabled Students in Utah

The Granite, Utah, school district may opt to provide home tutoring for severely disabled children who need constant nursing care, a federal judge has ruled.

U.S. District Judge David Sam said last month that the federal Individuals With Disabilities Education Act does not require the district to provide in-school nursing care for severely disabled students.

The parents of a student identified as Shannon M., a 7-year-old with muscular dystrophy who must use a feeding tube and a respirator, had sued the district when officials refused to provide the nursing care in schools. The care for Shannon would have cost the district an estimated $30,000 a year.

Judge Sam said the district's seven nurses, who must serve 75,000 students in 90 schools, could not be expected to care full time for one student.

"The expense of providing Shannon's requested care would undoubtedly take money away from other programs," Judge Sam said in his opinion.

While Shannon would receive more educational benefit from being in school, Judge Sam held, the district met the federal law's provisions by providing her with sufficient home instruction.

At least eight other children in the district were awaiting the ruling, school officials said; in-school care for those children

A Cone of Contention

When the price of ice cream at an Ohio school's cafeteria went up 15 cents, a savvy 5th grader miffed at the price hike decided to put his classroom learning to good use.

Early last month, Mike Mullen, a student at Parkview Intermediate School in Fairview Park, a Cleveland suburb, decided that the 35-cent ice-cream pops he was used to eating at the school cafeteria weren't worth the new asking price of 50 cents.

Along with his friends Mike Shugrue and Matt McIntyre, he urged classmates to join in a spontaneous boycott of the frosty sweets.

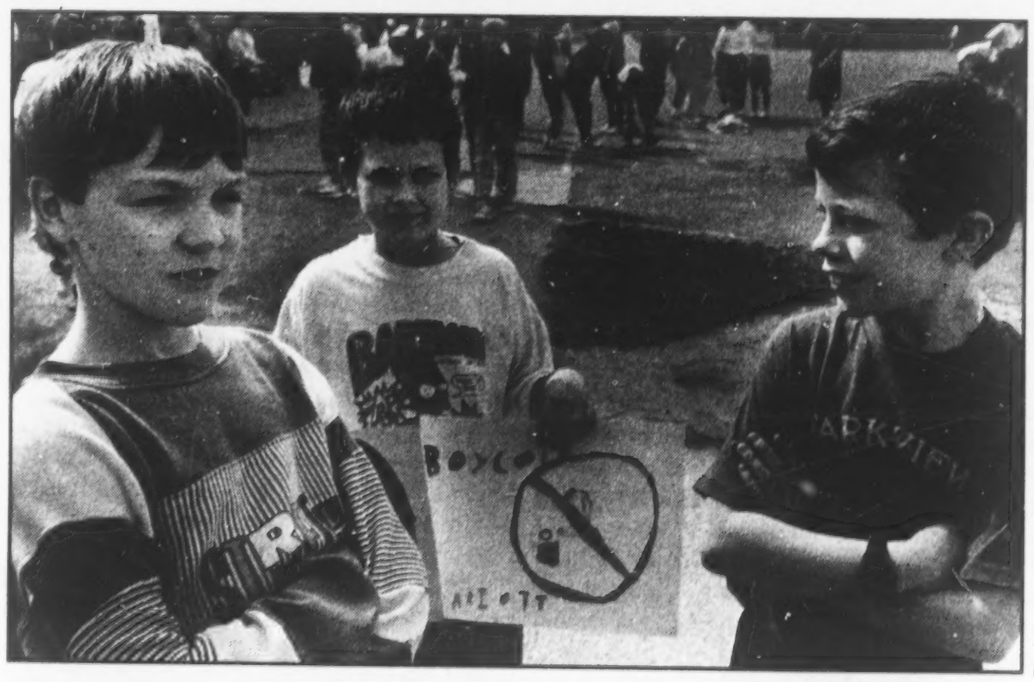
When the young protesters posted "Don't Buy Ice Cream" signs around the cafeteria, more than 100 students joined the kid-consumer boycott.

Joseph J. Hruby, the school's principal, says the students got the idea from a recent lesson on First Amendment rights.

"How often can you take a social-studies lesson and apply it to a real-world situation?" Mr. Hruby asks.

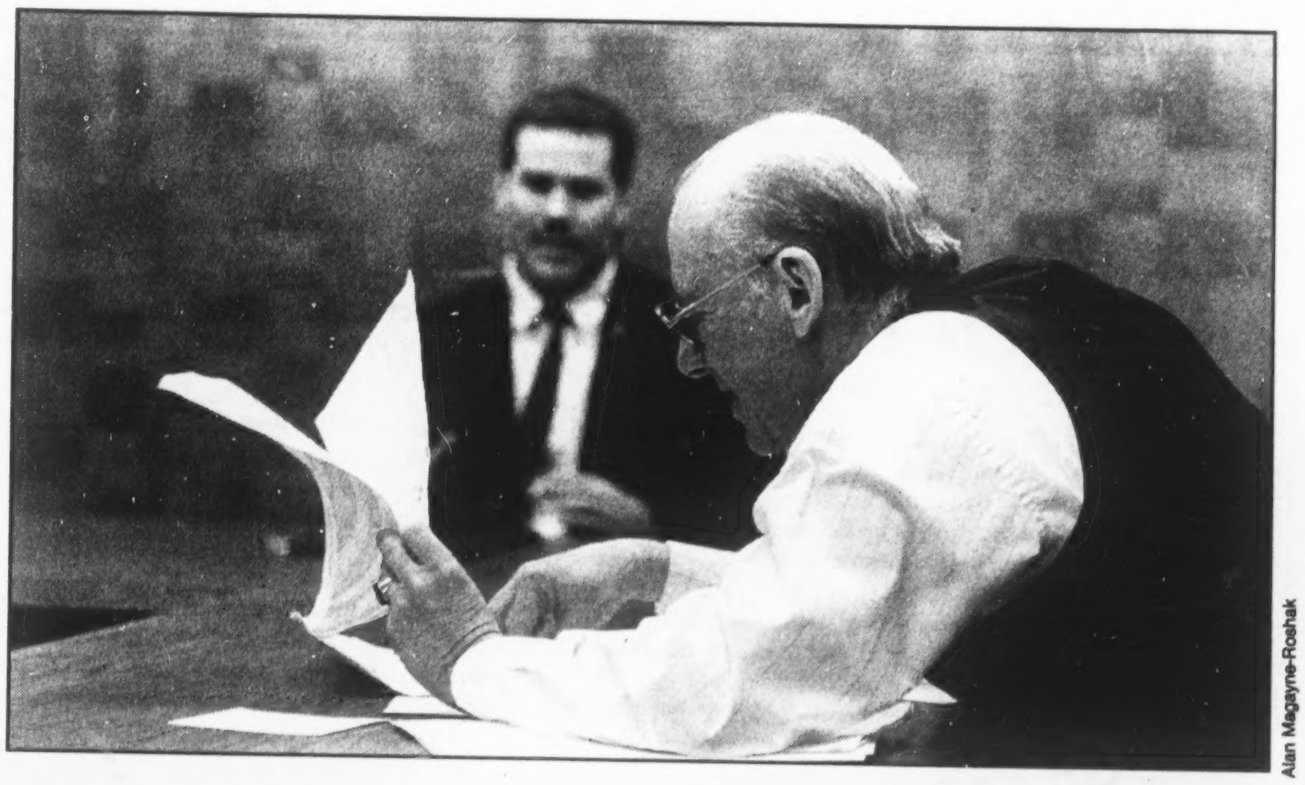
After three weeks of the boycott, Marriott Management Services, which provides food service to dozens of schools and colleges in the area, caved in and lowered the price to 45 cents.

There's no word on whether the youngsters plan to exercise their rights in regard to other items on the menu. —S.K.G.



David I. Andersen/Cleveland Plain Dealer

From left, Mike Mullen, Matt McIntyre, and Mike Shugrue organized a boycott of ice cream sold in their school's cafeteria to protest a price increase.



Alan Magayne-Roshak

Martin Haberman uses his "urban-teacher selection interview" to select candidates for various nontraditional teacher-preparation programs that emphasize practical, on-the-job training.

from teachers they don't love?"

On each question or series of questions, Mr. Haberman has developed a continuum, with answers a star teacher would provide on one end and quitters' responses on the other. If the respondent provides the answer of a quitter on any question, he or she fails the interview. Successful candidates tend to provide answers that fall somewhere along the spectrum.

Mr. Haberman says he is trying to discover a prospective teacher's ideology and methods. "We get what a person thinks a teacher in a school serving poor kids is supposed to be doing and why, and also the behaviors they would engage in," he notes.

In his vision of a good urban teacher, what emerges is a persistent, flexible, intelligent, resourceful, energetic person willing to admit his or her own fallibility. (And no, Mr. Haberman is not looking for people who think they have to love all children and be loved by them in return.)

'We Don't Miss Stars'

After the interview, Mr. Haberman and the other interviewer classify the candidate as a "star," "high potential," "average potential," or "no potential."

"We don't miss 'no's' and we don't miss 'stars,' " he asserts. Some teachers that he predicted would be great turn out to be merely good, and vice versa, but all the teachers he picks turn out to be successful in the classroom, he adds.

Mr. Haberman is currently interviewing Milwaukee paraprofessionals for a program that will train them to become elementary- or middle-school teachers for the city's public schools.

All three paraprofessionals interviewed this day express some surprise after they leave the room. "I expected the interview to focus a little bit more on me," Robert Tilden says. "But I guess that's what they're getting at by nailing you with difficult questions and seeing what you come up with."

Mr. Tilden, who graduated from college almost 20 years ago with a degree in mechanical engineering, typifies the sort of older candidates with diverse experiences attracted to Mr. Haberman's training programs over the years. Since college, Mr. Tilden has worked as an industrial designer and hotel manager, and served two years as a missionary in Argentina.

Joel Koeper, another paraprofessional trying to get into the program, calls the process "a good technique" for selecting teachers.

"Usually in an interview, you answer a question and they leave it alone, and you're pretty much finished," he says. "They were trying to dig a little bit deeper and see if there's anything there."

After going through Mr. Haberman's interview as part of another recent program, Carolyn Ealy is a big fan of the process. "The beautiful part about this interview is that it knows no race, color, creed, or age," says Ms. Ealy, a math and science teacher at Milwaukee's Thomas Edison Middle School.

In interviews for other jobs with the city's school system, she found she could fudge her answers, says Ms. Ealy, who now helps Mr. Haberman conduct some interviews. "This really gets to the heart" of what urban teachers do, she says.

Plenty of Minority Teachers

Mr. Haberman estimates that about two-thirds of the paraprofessionals he selects for the current program will be minorities. This, he says, proves that plenty of qualified minority candidates want to become teachers.

"We can find all the good minority teachers we want, provided we don't look in undergraduate schools of education," Mr. Haberman says. "In undergraduate schools of education, we're going to find less than 5 percent of the students are minorities, and they're going to be less bright than the minorities in the other schools and colleges."

Milwaukee does not use the term "alternative certification"—the paraprofessionals are applying for the Metropolitan Multicultural Teacher-Education Program—but the similarities are unmistakable. Mr. Haberman has trained administrators of other alternative-route programs—most notably in Texas—to use his interview, and he has recently been working with the Chicago Teachers' Union because teachers and principals there now have the authority to select teachers for their own schools.

Despite his claims of success, however, people are not exactly scrambling to get their hands on the interview form.

Part of the problem, Mr. Haberman maintains, is that many urban systems do not want to screen out any potential teachers.

"They want anybody who shows up," he says. "There are a lot of cities that would like to use this, but they can't because they need enough day-to-day subs."

And Mr. Haberman acknowledges that some people do not believe the interview works as well as he says it does. Part of that skepticism may be a product of his blunt criticism of the education establishment, which does not endear Mr. Haberman to some of his colleagues.

Some teacher educators, in particular, have said the interview eliminates candidates who could develop into good teachers, even if they fail to show that during the interview.

Other critics have said that good teaching is a personal, subjective matter that cannot be distilled into essential elements and tested in a half-hour interview.

"I can't describe 100 percent of what good teachers do," Mr. Haberman responds. "But I can describe 60 percent, and I'm happy with that."

The fact that he does not charge people to use his interview process also makes it suspect to some, he says.

"It's very hard for people to believe it's a quality product if they get it for nothing," Mr. Haberman says. "I would like to make a lot of money, but I just don't know how."■

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tain ingredients. . . . We have also developed a list of optional ones that would be a good idea, but we wouldn't require. [The required items] include everything from student work samples to endorsements—written statements from other faculty members or student-teaching supervisors—to field-placement observations.

Journals are something we have in as optional. Lesson plans and unit plans are required. We are also interested in the product of the student-teachers' students' work—evidence of the pupils' learning and reflective statements by the college students about what they were trying to do and why they did thus and so.

Q. What would an institutional portfolio look like?

A. There is aggregate data that would run across the student body in any of these programs, and certain surveys would probably be in there—G.P.A. information, etc. The notion is, then a visiting team would come and review the institutional portfolio. It would include samples from student portfolios, and if they want access to [more] student portfolios, that would be available. We would expect institutions to have representative samples of what is in student portfolios, and not only best work, but growth over a period of four years.

Q. How do these efforts mesh with the effort to use portfolios in precollegiate education in Vermont?

A. Independent of what they are doing in the public schools, we did indeed come to portfolios as the best way to collect and look at . . . data. The irony in using this is that we are directly or indirectly exposing would-be teachers to portfolios, which will help them in Vermont when they go out into the schools and use portfolio evaluation with their students.

Q. When would this begin?

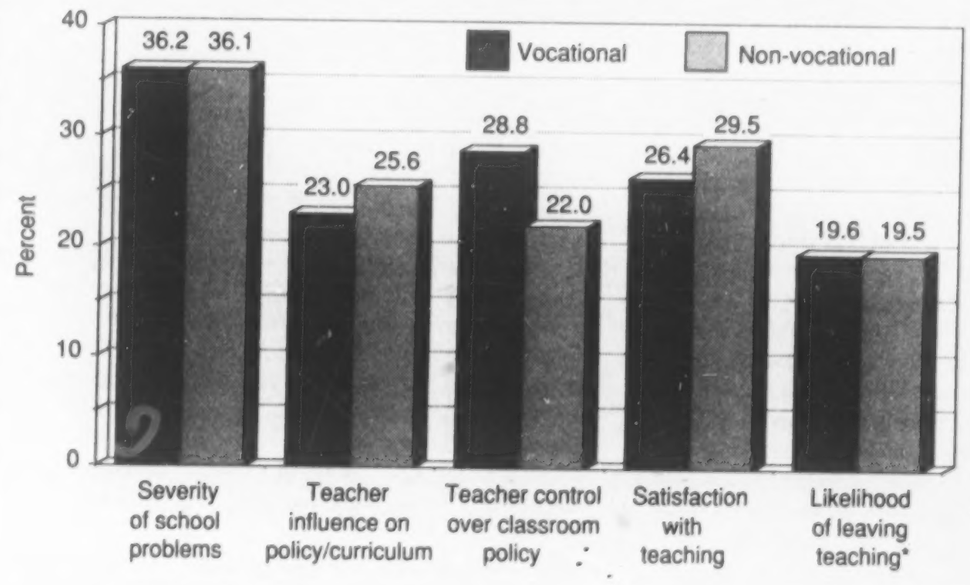
A. If it is adopted by the state board, it would begin immediately. We have some institutions that would go through it next year. They will not really be looking at graduates, they will be looking at student products. But we didn't think we could wait four years to do anything.

The other issue we've been pretty honest about is that we don't really know what this is going to cost and how feasible it is. But we've said we're ready to go ahead and two or three years into the process we may have to revisit those questions. ■

DIMENSIONS

Vocational Teachers' Attitudes

Percentage of public-school teachers of grades 9 to 12 giving "high" ratings on selected teacher-perception and attitude scales: 1987-88



* "likelihood of leaving teaching" combines the categories "Will probably continue unless something better comes along" and "Definitely plan to leave teaching as soon as possible."

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics